AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as indicated hereafter. [Use ~~strikethrough~~ for deleted matter and underlined for added matter.]

Claims:

1. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus for transferring poultry carcasses suspended from shackles from a first overhead conveyor to a second overhead conveyor, in which overhead conveyors the carcasses are transported suspended from shackles ~~and the like,~~ comprising a transfer wheel rotatable about a vertical axis and positioned between both the first and the second overhead conveyors, ~~which~~ said transfer wheel ~~is~~ being provided with holders for the carcasses ~~and with first means for transferring the carcasses from the first overhead conveyor to the transfer wheel and with second means for transferring the carcasses from the transfer wheel to the second overhead conveyor~~, and orientation means further being present for equalizing the spacial initial orientation of the carcass in the holder at receipt on the transfer wheel and the spacial final orientation of the carcass in the holder at its discharge from the transfer wheel, the spacial initial orientation and the spacial final orientation being identical relative to the direction of travel of the carcass from the first overhead conveyor to the second overhead conveyor.

A9 cont

2. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus according to claim 1, the orientation means being adapted for keeping the spacial orientation of the carcass in the holder constant during the transport on the transfer wheel.

3. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus according to claim 2, the holders being bearing mounted in the transfer wheel to be rotatable about themselves about a vertical axis.

4. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus according to claim 3, the orientation means being adapted for relative rotation of the holders with respect to the transfer wheel.

5. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus according to claim 4, the orientation means being adapted for letting the holders rotate 1:1 with the transfer wheel.

6. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus according to claim 4, the orientation means comprising the first orientation means for orienting a first of the holders, and second orientation means for orienting others of the holders, which second orientation means are operated by the first orientation means.

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7. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus according to claim 6, the transfer wheel being connected to a vertical shaft in a rotatably fixed manner, the shaft being rotatable about the vertical axis, the first orientation means comprising a first driving disc provided on the first holder, a second driving disc placed loosely on the ~~axis~~ shaft but retained in spacial orientation, and a driving belt or driving chain running circumferentially about both.

8. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus according to claim 7, the diameter of both driving discs being equal.

9. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus according to claim 7, further provided with a tension pulley for the driving belt or driving chain.

10. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus according to claim 6, the second orientation means comprising a first toothed wheel that is attached to the first holder in a rotably fixed manner, a central toothed wheel freely rotatable on the ~~axis~~ shaft and driven by the first toothed wheel, as well as second toothed wheels attached in a rotably fixed manner to every other holder, which second toothed wheels are in driving engagement with the central toothed wheel.

11. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus according to claim 10, the second toothed wheels having a diameter that is equal to the one of the first toothed wheel.

12. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus for transferring poultry carcasses from a first overhead conveyor to a second overhead conveyor, in which overhead conveyors the carcasses are transported suspended from shackles ~~and the like,~~ comprising a transfer wheel rotatable about a vertical axis and positioned between both the first and the second overhead conveyors, which wheel is provided with holders for the carcasses ~~and with first means for transferring the carcasses from the first overhead conveyor to the transfer wheel and with second means for transferring the carcasses from the transfer wheel to the second overhead conveyor~~, and orientation means further being present for rotating the each holders about a central shaft with respect to the transfer wheel during the transport of the holders by the transfer wheel, wherein each central shaft is radially spaced from the shaft of the transfer wheel.

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13. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus according to claim 12, the orientation means being adapted for 1:1 rotation of the holders and the transfer wheel.

14. (Currently amended) A ~~H~~holder for suspended transport of a poultry carcass, provided with two substantially parallel accommodation spaces for the legs of the carcass, the accommodation spaces each forming a continuous slit in horizontal direction from one end to the other end and open at both ends, the distance between the accommodation spaces at their one end being different from the distance therebetween at their other end.

15. (Currently amended) A ~~H~~holder according to claim 14, inclined turned end members being arranged on either side of one end of the accommodation spaces to prevent unintentional backwards movement of the legs.

16. (Currently amended) A ~~H~~holder according to claim 14, the distance between the accommodation spaces being larger at said one end than at said other end, inclined turned end members being arranged on either side of said one end of the accommodation spaces to prevent unintentional backwards movement of the legs out of said one end.

17. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus according to claim 1, the holders being provided with accommodation spaces for the legs of the carcass, the accommodation spaces each forming a continuous horizontal slit.

18. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus according to claim 17, in the holders the distance between the accommodation spaces at their one end being different from the distance therebetween at their other end.

19. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus according to claim 12, the holders being provided with accommodation spaces for the legs of the carcass, the accommodation spaces each forming a continuous slit in horizontal direction.

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20. (Currently amended) An ~~A~~apparatus according to claim 19, in the holders the distance between the accommodation spaces at their one end being different from the distance therebetween at their other end.

21. (New) An apparatus for transferring poultry carcasses from a first overhead conveyor to a second overhead conveyor, comprising:

a transfer wheel rotatable about a shaft and disposed between the first and the second overhead conveyors;

a receipt point and a discharge point, the receipt point being disposed between the first overhead conveyor and the transfer wheel, the discharge point being disposed between the transfer wheel and the second overhead conveyor;

a plurality of holders, each holder being configured to receive one of the carcasses from the first overhead conveyor at the receipt point and to discharge the carcass to the second overhead conveyor at the discharge point; and

wherein each holder has a first orientation at the receipt point and a second orientation at the discharge point and the first and second orientations are the same.

22. (New) The apparatus according to claim 21, wherein the holders are rotatably mounted to the transfer wheel.

23. (New) The apparatus according to claim 21, wherein each holder maintains a constant orientation relative to the centerline during rotation of the transfer wheel.

24. (New) An apparatus for transferring poultry carcasses from a first overhead conveyor to a second overhead conveyor, comprising:

a transfer wheel positioned between said first and second overhead conveyors, said transfer wheel having a central axis and a perimeter rotatable about said central axis,

a plurality of bird holders spaced about said perimeter of said transfer wheel for receiving poultry carcasses from said first overhead conveyor and carrying poultry carcasses from said first overhead conveyor about said central axis to said second overhead conveyor and delivering carcasses to said second overhead conveyor,

orientation control means responsive to the rotation of said transfer wheel for progressively maintaining the orientation of said bird holders and the carcasses carried by said bird holders as said transfer wheel rotates, so that the carcasses retain their orientation as received from said first overhead conveyor as they move about said transfer wheel and are delivered to said second overhead conveyor in the same orientation as received from said first overhead conveyor.